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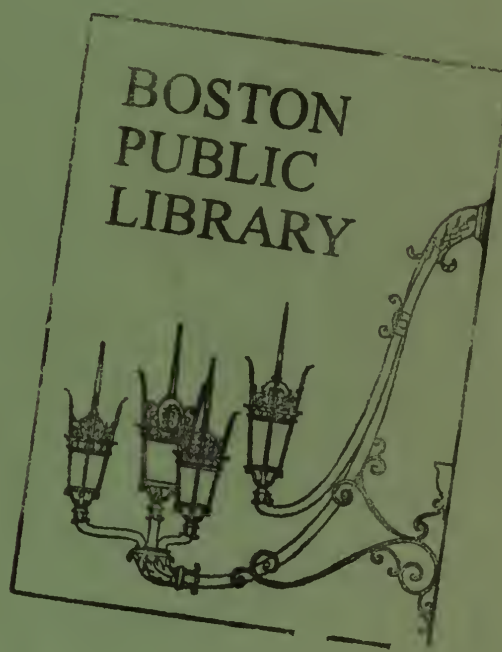
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IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED SOUTHWEST EXPRESSWAY ON JAMAICA PLAIN



Prepared By Working Group From: JAMAICA PLAIN COMMUNITY COUNCIL
JAMAICA PLAIN AREA PLANNING ACTION COUNCIL
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP CENTER
MENDELL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
BROOKSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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Second Edition

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50 Call Street
Jamaica Plain, Mass.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

If the presently proposed Southwest Expressway is built through Jamaica Plain it will no doubt have major physical, social, and economic effects on the community. This study has attempted to anticipate what the highway's actual impact on Jamaica Plain would be. The citizens of the area can ensure the best planning of their neighborhoods by:

1. A careful examination of the plan for the Southwest Expressway and its possible effects on Jamaica Plain.
2. Taking organized action within the community to bring about any changes which seem necessary in the present plans.

One basic change in the present Expressway plan to make it less destructive to Jamaica Plain is to build a "depressed" rather than the proposed "elevated embankment" type of highway. A depressed road would be a far smaller physical, visual, and psychological barrier through the community. Crossways over the road would be safer, more convenient and pleasant, and could be added in the future as needed. Businesses, schools, and community facilities would be easily accessible from either side of the highway. A depressed highway also makes "air rights development" (such as the Star Market over the Massachusetts Turnpike) possible, so that light industry, parking areas, schools, and even homes could be built over the road. These would serve as further links between the two sides of the highway. The federal Department of Transportation has shown a definite interest in aiding such development. Furthermore, a depressed design would reduce land takings and noise from the Expressway.

While it might be more expensive to depress the Expressway through Jamaica Plain, the Department of Public Works has changed their original plans for constructing elevated structures in Cambridge, Brookline and the Fenway as a result of community opposition.

A number of the proposed highway's negative effects are unrelated to the road's being elevated or depressed. For example:

(1) The difficulty of getting mortgages, insurance, or improvement loans on homes in, or near, the Expressway's path has hastened the deterioration of these residential areas.

(2) The present assessment procedures for property takings, in which the owner receives little or no reimbursement for recent home improvements, also lead to deterioration.

(3) Additional hardship is created for displaced property owners, since the state pays only the "fair market value" for a particular property, and not its actual replacement cost.

(4) Boston's severe shortage of low and moderate-income housing will mean that residents displaced by the highway will have great difficulty in finding comparable relocation housing at rentals, or sales prices, they can afford - especially the sixty percent who wish to stay in Jamaica Plain.

The need to start new government programs, or to make better use of the present ones, has been emphasized in this report. There is a controversy now over the issue of expressways versus some kind of mass transit system as the answer to Boston's transportation problems. Deciding what position to take on this issue and on the issue of an elevated versus depressed road are two items out of many which are raised for community discussion by this report.

FOREWORD

The decision to prepare this Impact Study grew out of a series of discussions involving a number of residents of Jamaica Plain who were concerned about the immediate and long-range impact of the Southwest Expressway upon their community. The residents included representatives of agencies which sponsored the study: the Jamaica Plain Community Council, the Jamaica Plain Area Planning Action Council, the Community Leadership Center, the Mendell Neighborhood Association, and the Brookside Neighborhood Association. The study was prepared by a Working Group consisting of twelve volunteers and staff from the sponsoring groups, assisted by Urban Planning Aid, Inc. Urban Planning Aid is a group of advocate planners who offer their professional services to assist community organizations in planning for the development of their neighborhoods.

The impending construction of a Southwest Expressway through the center of Jamaica Plain represents the largest physical change to the community likely to occur in the foreseeable future. While it would be difficult to forecast all social and economic changes the highway may bring, the group saw the need to consider possible changes before the expressway is constructed and they have become a reality.

At the moment it seems likely that the Southwest Expressway will be built. This study, however, is based on the assumption that it is desirable for residents to play an active role in controlling the impact of highway construction or other public programs upon their community. Therefore, an attempt has been made to present, as honestly and accurately as possible, a picture of the effect the expressway will have on the lives of those who live in Jamaica Plain. While this task can only be approximated at some points, it is hoped that it will help the citizens of Jamaica Plain to discern what, if anything, they wish to do to prepare for the expressway, and what, if anything, they wish to have changed in its plans.

Members of the Working Group were: Mrs. Jerrolyn Simpson, Mrs. Margaret Laudato, Mr. John Ahern, Mr. John Bassett, Mr. Charles Carpenter, Mr. John Cunningham, Mr. David Cowles, Mr. Ronald Hafer, Mr. Erling Hanson, Mr. Donald Hughes, Mr. Peter Olson, Mr. William O'Leary.

Copies of this report may be obtained from the sponsoring groups and from Urban Planning Aid.

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I INTRODUCTION

If there is to be meaningful citizen participation in the planning of public programs that directly affect their communities, citizens must have a great deal of information about possible courses of action and their implications. The present report has been written for this purpose, as applied to Jamaica Plain: namely, to provide information concerning the plans for building the Southwest Expressway through Jamaica Plain, the background and implications of those plans, and possible changes and alternatives to present plans. This report does not recommend any particular action on the part of the residents of Jamaica Plain, but it does discuss possible ways of controlling the community impact of the expressway if it is built. It is hoped that widespread discussion within the community, based at least in part upon the contents of this report, will provide a basis for each citizen to decide what action, if any, is called for.

II PHYSICAL EFFECTS

A. General Description of the Expressway

The Southwest Expressway is now planned to run for a distance of slightly less than 2 miles through Jamaica Plain. This expressway has been designed as part of the national interstate highway system to carry through traffic between I-95 in the South and I-95 in the North. The planned route follows the present right of way of the New Haven Railroad, at about the same elevation as the existing track bed. It is very much wider, of course, since it is planned to have 8 lanes of traffic and a total of 4 breakdown lanes (left and right sides, both directions), with three MBTA tracks in the expressway median. In fact, the total width of the strip of land taken for the highway will vary between approximately 300 and 500 feet in contrast to the present railroad holdings which vary from 100 and 200 feet in width. The construction will be by earth fill (i.e., on an embankment) rather than steel structure.

Two interchanges are planned for Jamaica Plain, one at Jackson Sq. and

the other at Forest Hills. There also are to be only two MBTA stations - each to be at or near the two interchanges - rather than three as at present. The planned new underpasses are similar in location to the present ones under the railroad, though the new ones will be much longer.

The total length of the planned Southwest Expressway is just over 8 miles, with an estimated cost of around 80 million dollars. The cost of the two-mile section in Jamaica Plain has been estimated at approximately 20 million dollars. The Southwest Expressway, in turn, is part of the proposed Inner Belt and Expressway System which also includes the Routes 2 and 3, the Northern (I-93) and the Northeast (I-95) Expressways. This proposed system consists of over 26 miles of new expressway costing something between 325 and 400 million dollars, with the Federal government paying 90% of the total. Questions have been raised about the design adequacy of the proposed Expressway System, particularly its effects on established communities and upon the future development of the Metropolitan area. Some of these questions, along with arguments supporting the expressway system, will be touched upon in Section VI.

B. Design Status and Schedule of the Expressway

There are a number of uncertainties concerning the Southwest Expressway at this time. Certain aspects of the design of the expressway are still not settled. For instance, the Federal government has not yet approved any of the detailed design. This fact means that the particular properties which are designated for acquisition by the state may still change, in some cases. Another feature not yet fully determined is the redesign of the New Haven Railroad tracks. It is fully expected that these tracks will be rerouted along the Midland Division right of way, which runs east of and roughly parallel to the presently used Providence Division. No legal agreement, however, has yet been reached between the New Haven Railroad and the MBTA. The possibility of leaving both the two New Haven tracks and the three MBTA tracks (thereby widening the expressway by another 50 feet) has been carefully studied

